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## OPEN DISCUSSION

HON. JAMES M. CURLEY, Mayor of Boston:

I want to say that I do not subscribe to the proposition that it is an impossibility to secure the assistance of the substantial, hard-headed business men of any community in the matter of assisting in the proper, and honest, and economic administration of public affairs.

I will admit, it is an almost impossible task to induce them to become candidates for office in our city government, but it has been possible for us in Boston to avail ourselves of their services in an advisory and supervisory capacity through the creation of an Industrial Bureau, whose existence is made possible by the private subscriptions of more than 300 of our leading successful business men. Those men have raised a fund of \$70,000. They are financially, and they are personally, interested in an honest administration of public affairs, and through their instrumentality it has been possible in Boston for this year to secure the adoption of a gas street lighting contract on a ten-year basis at a saving of \$36,000 per annum to the city, and within the next thirty days an electric lighting contract will be signed which will mean a saving of \$82,000 per annum, or a total of more than \$1,180,000 on a ten-year street lighting contract.

The real weakness of all municipal administration is the fact that there is no standard system to follow, and the establishment of municipal standards that may serve as a guide for proper municipal administration are just as necessary to publicly owned utilities as they are to the privately administered public service corporations

HON. OLIVER P. NEWMANN, President Board of Commissioners,  
District of Columbia:

*Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:* I want to put the city of Washington, the capital of the United States, in the federal District of Columbia, squarely, positively and affirmatively in line for public ownership of municipal utilities.

The government of the District of Columbia consists of three commissioners. For thirty-five years, until a little more than a year ago, I think those commissioners uniformly opposed any suggestions

looking toward public ownership of local utilities. A great many of them, for a considerable part of that period, would not have broken their necks to have obtained effective regulation of local utilities. But a little over a year ago three commissioners of the District of Columbia were appointed, each one of whom believed positively in public ownership of municipal utilities, and each one of whom believed in the regulation of public utilities as a sort of necessary evil, which would lead to the ultimate proper solution of the question—public ownership.

These commissioners are appointed by the President of the United States. I do not wish to commit the President of the United States to public ownership of local utilities, and I cannot do so; I have no authority to do so. But I wish to leave with you the thought that the three gentlemen whom he selected for commissioners of the District of Columbia, for the work of conducting the government of the national capital, were municipal ownership men, and that did not deter him from appointing them.

A great many people imagine that the District of Columbia, or the city of Washington, is a sort of a beautiful shell in which there are a number of amiable and lesiurely gentlemen who conduct the affairs of the national government, in a more or less leisurely and pleasant way. But what they do not realize is that the city of Washington is more than that. It is a community of 350,000 people, with all the social and economic problems and difficulties, with the inspirations and hopes of any other community of 350,000 people.

We have not self-government there in the District of Columbia as you have, so I cannot positively say that the people of the District believe in public ownership as the commissioners do, but I do go so far as to say that I believe a great majority of them believe in public ownership of local utilities, and that they desire the utilities of the District of Columbia to be municipalized.

So much for the fact that the District government believes in the economic principle of public ownership. The situation, however, is much better than that. We are going to get it in Washington. Sitting behind me on this platform is a gentleman who is a member of the House of Representatives, representing the state of Ohio, a member of the committee on the District of Columbia of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Robert Crosser, and a

bill bearing his name and directing the commissioners of the District of Columbia to condemn and acquire the street railways of the District of Columbia, has been introduced by Mr. Crosser.

Of course, anybody can introduce a bill, but this bill has been reported to the House of Representatives by the District Committee of the House of Representatives, with a strong report from that committee, advocating its passage, and is now upon the calendar of the House of Representatives, where it will be taken up this winter, and where Mr. Crosser believes it will receive favorable action. In other words, he believes and I believe that the House of Representatives is going to pass a bill this winter for the municipalization of the street railways of the national capital.